

Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on “Examining H.R. 1786, James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation
Reauthorization Act”
June 11, 2015

(As Prepared for Delivery)

On September 11, 2001, the world as we know it was turned upside down by unthinkable acts of terrorism, which took the lives of nearly 3,000 individuals in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia and left a mark on every American. From the smoldering ruins of the Twin Towers and the Pentagon to the wreckage of United Airlines Flight 93, the painful images and heartbreaking personal stories of that day will not be forgotten. We remember the thousands of innocent lives lost and the communities of loved ones they left behind. We also honor the countless acts of heroism and leadership shown by brave American men and women in those hours of pandemonium and in the days, weeks, and months that followed.

First responders spent hours, days even, in air that was thick with dust and smoke digging through the rubble, and searching for survivors. When I visited Ground Zero just days after the attacks, New York’s finest were still working round the clock in impossible conditions for the recovery efforts – their selfless work took a toll on their health. The federal government provided aid to those individuals who were injured and the families of those who were killed in the attacks through a discretionary grant program.

In 2011, the Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act established the World Trade Center Health Program and the Victim Compensation Fund. Our Ranking Member Frank Pallone and our New York colleagues Reps. Carolyn Maloney, Peter King, and Jerrold Nadler have jointly introduced H.R. 1786, the “James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Reauthorization Act” which would reauthorize both of these programs.

At today’s hearing, we will focus on the World Trade Center Health Program as it is the program that falls in this committee’s jurisdiction. The authorization for the World Trade Center Health Program ends at the end of September while the Victim Compensation Fund remains open to applicants into October 2016.

The WTC Health program funds networks of specialized medical programs designed to monitor and treat those with 9/11 related conditions. The members enrolled in the program are not just from the greater New York area. In 2014, there were 71,942 individuals in the World Trade Center Health Program from 429 out of 435 congressional districts. In fact, there are 75 Michigan residents currently enrolled in the WTC Health Program.

Today’s hearing is an important opportunity to learn more about how the World Trade Center Health Program has operated since its authorization in 2010 and what is needed for it to successfully operate and meet the needs of its members in the future. I would like to thank all of the witnesses for taking the time to be here today to discuss the program, and I would like to especially thank Officer Howley and Detective Burnette for their service to our great country and for sharing their personal stories and struggles with the subcommittee.

###